THE BROADWAY ANTHOLOGY

By

EDWARD L. BERNAYS
SAMUEL HOFFENSTEIN
WALTER J. KINGSLEY
MURDOCK PEMBERTON

THE
BROADWAY ANTHOLOGY

Dear Uncle Walt:

I know how bad it all is, but I am only 1/4 to blame.

Murdock,

Feb. 4-1918.

The Broadway Anthology

BY

EDWARD L. BERNAYS
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EDWARD L. BERNAYS

ACCIDENTS WILL HAPPEN

He was a burly Dutch tenor,
And I patiently trailed him in his waking and sleeping hours
That I might not lose a story,—
But his life was commonplace and unimaginative —
Air raids and abdications kept his activities,
(A game of bridge yesterday, a ride to Tarrytown),
Out of the papers.
I watchfully waited,
Yearning a coup that would place him on the
Musical map.
A coup, such as kissing a Marshal Joffre,
Aeroplaning over the bay,
Diving with Annette Kellerman.
Then for three days I quit the city
To get a simple contralto into the western papers.
Returning I entered my office; the phone jangled.
The burly tenor was tearfully sobbing and moaning over the wire;
Tremor and emotion choked his throat.
This was his ominous message:
A taxicab accident almost had killed him two and one half days ago;
He had escaped with his body and orchid-lined voice —
And not a line in the mornings or evenings!
What could I do about it?
Accidents will happen.

THE BARITONE

He was a wonderful Metropolitan singer.
His name had been blazoned over these United States,
And in Europe it was as well known.
Records of him could be bought in the smallest hamlet;
Nothing but praise had been shed upon the glory of his name.
In May he was scheduled to sing in Chicago
At a festival where thousands were to foregather
To do praise to him and his voice.
Two days before he left, he came to his manager's office
With a sickly expression all over his rotund face
And a deathly gasp in his voice.
One thought he needed a doctor,
Or the first aid of some Red Cross nurses.
He was ushered into the private office
To find out his trouble.
This was his lament in short;
A friend, in the hurry of the moment,
Had procured tickets for him on the Twentieth Century
Which demanded an extra fare of six dollars,—
And he wanted to ride on the cheapest train.
So we got him tickets on another road
Which takes thirty six hours to Chicago and perhaps more,
And the great singer, whose name has been blazoned over these United States
And was as well known in Europe,
Walked out contented and smiling like a young boy.

PATRIOTISM

The patriotic orchestra of eighty five men
Was keyed to an extraordinary patriotic pitch
For these were patriotic concerts,
Supported by the leading patriots of the town,
(Including a Bulgarian merchant, an Austrian physician and a German lawyer),
And all the musicians were getting union wages — and in the summer at that.
So they were patriotic too.
The Welsh conductor was also patriotic,
For his name on the program was larger than that of the date or the hall,
But when the manager asked him to play a number
Designated as " Dixie,"
He disposed of it shortly with the words:
" It is too trivial — that music."
And, instead, he played a lullaby by an unknown Welsh composer,—
(Because he was a Welshman). . . .
The audience left after the concert was over
And complimented itself individually and collectively on " doing its bit "
By attending and listening to these patriotic concerts.

THE PILLOW CASES

The train was due to arrive at eleven that night,
But owing to the usual delay it did not arrive until one.
The reporters of the leading dailies
Were still waiting grouchily on the station platform
for the great star.
For weeks his name had blotted out every bare wall,
And the date sheets of his coming had reddened the
horizon.
Now he steps off the train, tired and disgruntled.
What cares he for the praise of the public and their
prophets
Awaiting him impatiently at the station?
It's a bed he wants — any bed will do;
The quicker he gets it, the better for the song on the
morrow.
But in cooking the news for the public
One a. m. is the same thing as noon day.
So they rushed the star with these questions:
" Not conscripted yet? . . ."
" How do you like this town? . . ."
" Will you give any encores tomorrow? . . ."
" When will the war end? . . ."
Ruthlessly he plowed through them,
Like a British tank at Messines.
The tenor wanted a bed,
But Lesville wanted a story. . . .
On the platform patiently nestled were twenty six
pieces of luggage,
Twenty six pieces of luggage, containing more than
their content,

Twenty six pieces of luggage would get him the story,
he had not given himself.
Craftily, one lured the reporters to look on this bulging
baggage,
" Pillows and pillows and pillows . . ." was whispered,
" Tonight he will sleep on them."
Vulture-like swooped down the porters,
Bearing them off to the taxis.
Next morning the papers carried the story:
" Singer Transports His Own Bedding,"
But the artist slept soundly on Ostermoors that night.
The baggage held scores for the orchestra.

BETTER INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

He was the head of a large real estate firm,
And his avocation was seeking the good in a Better Industrial Relations Society.
They were going to have an exhibit in their church building,
At which it was to be proved
That giving a gold watch for an invention
That made millions for the factory owner
Was worthwhile.
But they needed a press agent
To let the world and themselves
Know that what they were doing was good.
I was chosen for the work,
But the head of the large real estate firm
Thought that half a column a day was too little
To record the fact that a cash register company
In which he owned stock
Had presented a medal to an employee who had remained with them
At the same salary for fifteen years.
So he had me fired.
And the Better Industrial Relations Exhibit was a great success.
And many of the morning and evening newspapers
Ran editorials about it.

THE PRIMA DONNA

She had been interviewed at all possible times,—
And sometimes the interviews came at impossible ones;
But it did not matter to her
As long as the stories were printed and her name was spelt correctly.
So we sent a photographer to the hotel one day
To take pictures of her in her drawing room.
He was an ungentle photographer
Who had been accustomed to take pictures of young women
Coming into the harbor on shipboard, and no photograph was complete
Without limbs being crossed or suchwise.
But she did not mind even that,
If the pictures were published the next day.
He took a great number of her in her salon,
And departed happy at the day's bagging.
A great international disturbance reduced all the white space available
And no photographs were printed the next day
Of the prima donna.
And when I met her at rehearsal, she said very shortly:
" Je vous ne parle plus " and looked at me harshly.
Was I to blame for the international situation?

Though bandsmen's notes from the street below resound,
And the voices of jubilant masses proclaim a glorious holiday,
I painstakingly pick out words on the typewriter,
By fits and starts, thinking up a story about the great Metropolitan tenor.
The typewriter keys now hold no rhythmic tingle.
But the local manager in Iowa wants the story.
He has engaged the great tenor for a date next March
When the Tuesday musicale ladies give their annual benefit for the Shriners.
He wants the concert to be such a success,
That his Iowan town will henceforth be in the foreground
Of Iowan towns, as far as music is concerned.
So he has wired in for this tale about the singer,
A story about his wife and baby, and what the baby eats per diem.
And though the call is to the street below,
Where jubilant masses proclaim the holiday,
I must finish the story about the tenor's wife and baby
To put the Iowan town in the foreground, as far as music is concerned.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF CREDIT

The Irish prize play had come back to Broadway.
Where to put the credit? On the astute manager
Who saw in it
A year of Broadway, two of stock, eternity in the movies;
Or the League of Public Spirited Women
Banded together to uplift the Drama —
That was the question stirring dramatic circles and the public.
It had failed in its first run of three weeks at an uptown theatre
Miserably,
Despite glowing reviews in all the dailies.
But this come-back
At a Broadway theatre, with electric lights, and transient crowds
That would save it —
Was the universal verdict.
During the first week there was a tremendous fight
Between the two factions for the
Distribution of credit, and some critics said
The League of Public Spirited Women was responsible
For bringing the play back, because they had bulletined it,
And others said it was the astute manager.
But no audience came to the play after the second week.
And it went to the storehouse.
No one fought any longer for
The distribution of credit.

TEARS

Beads of perspiration on a hot summer's afternoon,
A hurry call from the Ritz,
Thoughts of plastering the city in half an hour,
With twenty-four sheets and large heralds,
And a page or two in all the dailies. . . .
She sat in a sumptuous suite at the Ritz,
Discussing with her husband,
Who had just returned from the beagles in South Carolina
Her new pet charity;
And she had called me in at this very moment,
Because she had struck a snag.
This was her charity:
She related with tears in her eyes,
What was she to do about it?
She received no response from the American public.
The poor assistant stagehands of the Paris theatres
They were out of work — destitute —
The theatres closed — and all the actors at the front.
But what could be done for them, the poor Paris stagehands?
That was her query.
And tears welled up in her eyes, as she spoke
While her husband chased the Angora from under the sofa —
I sat and discussed the question.
And tears came to my eyes,
But my tears were wept for another reason.

PHOTOGRAPHS

I had ordered the photographs of the prima donna.
They are lovely and beautiful to behold and they are printed before me in a magazine.
Her madonna like face sheds radiance on the prospective box-office patron;
He is dazzled by her sun-like head of hair;
He loses his heart and his pocket-book when he glances on them.
I felt happy that I changed photographers.
I felt that my discovery of a new artisan of the sensitized plate
Would bring glory and money to many.
I sit by the rolltop desk and pull out again the objects of my praises.
The telephone bell rings and awakens me from my reveries,—
It is the voice of the beautiful prima donna herself;
But the melodious notes the critics have praised are changed.
There is a raucous, strident tone in the voice;
It sounds like the rasping bark of the harpies.
"How dare you use those terrible photographs?
"What do you mean by insulting my beauty?"
There is a slam down of the telephone receiver,—
I turn to my work of writing an advertisement about the prima donna's voice.

SAMUEL HOFFENSTEIN

THE THEATRE SCRUBWOMAN DREAMS A DREAM

When morning mingles with the gloom
On empty stage and twilit aisle,
She comes with rag and pan and broom
To work — and dream awhile.

Illusion's laughter, fancy's tears,
The mimic loves of yesternight,
On empty stages of the years
Awake in the dim light.

She cannot sweep the phantoms out —
How sweet the sobbing violin! —
She cannot put the ghosts to rout —
How pale the heroine!

Oh! valiant hero, sorely tried! —
'Tis only dust that fills her eyes —
But he shall have his lovely bride
And she her paradise!

And she — the broom falls from her hands,
And is it dust that fills her eyes? —
Shall go with him to golden lands
And find her paradise! —

The morning wrestles with the gloom
On silent stage and chilly aisle,
She takes her rag and pan and broom
To work — and dream awhile!

THE STRANGE CASE OF THE MUSICAL COMEDY STAR

The lady cannot sing a note,
There is a languor in her throat
Beyond all healing,
She does not act at all, it seems,
Except in early morning dreams —
She lacks the feeling.

Her feet are pretty, but methinks,
The weighty and phlegmatic Sphinx
Could trip as lightly —
And yet she is a regular,
Serene and well established star
Who twinkles nightly.

And Solomon for all his stir,
Had not a single jewel on her,
Nor did his capers
Procure him even half the space
For publication of his face
In ancient papers.

Her gowns, her furs, her limousines
Would catch the eye of stately queens
In any city —
She cannot sing, or dance or act,
But then I have remarked the fact —
Her feet are pretty.

THE STAR IS WAITING TO SEE THE MANAGER

A moment since, the office boy,
Invisible as Night itself,
Reposed on some dim-curtained shelf
And tasted peace, without alloy.

Secure from all the day's alarms,
Of boss and bell the very jinx,
He gazed immobile as the Sphinx
On pompous front and painted charms.

Now out of interstellar space,
Beyond the sunlight and the storm,
Appears that lightning-laden form,
That toothful smile, that cryptic face.

Whence came he, who that breathes can tell? —
He was so hid from mortal eyes,
Perhaps he fell from paradise,
Perhaps they chased him out of hell.

But now his heels show everywhere,
A dozen doors are opened wide,
He stands before, behind, beside,
He fills the ether and the air.

Far quicker than a wink or beck,
Far sleeker than a juvenile,
He barely tops the giant smile
That wreathes his forehead and his neck.

Oh! sudden gold evolved from dross!
Who wrought the shining miracle?
What magic cast the dazzling spell? —
The star is here to see the boss!

All the fool's gold of the world,
All your dusty pageantries,
All your reeking praise of Self,
All your wise men's sophistries,
All that springs of golden birth,
Is not half the jester's worth!

Who's the jester? He is one,
Who behind the scenes hath been,
Caught Life with his make-up off,
Found him but a harlequin
Cast to play a tragic part —
And the two laughed, heart to heart!

IN A CAFÈ

Her face was the face of Age, with a pitiful smudge of Youth,
Carmine and heavy and lined, like a jester's mask on Truth;
And she laughed from the red lips outward, the laugh of the brave who die,
But a ghost in her laughter murmured, " I lie — I lie! "

She pressed the glass to her lips as one presses the lips of love,
And I said: " Are you always merry, and what is the art thereof? "
And she laughed from the red lips outward the laugh of the brave who die,
But a ghost in her laughter murmured, " I lie — I lie! "

TO A CABARET SINGER

Painted little singer of a painted song,
Painted little butterfly of a painted day,
The false blooms in your tresses, the spangles on your dresses,
The cold of your caresses,
I'll tell you what they say —
" The glass is at my lips, but the wine is far away,
The music's in my throat, but my soul no song confesses,
The laughter's on my tongue, but my heart is clay."

Scarlet little dreamer of a frozen dream,
Whirling bit of tinsel on the troubled spray,
'Tis not your hair's dead roses (your sunless, scentless roses)
'Tis not your sham sad poses
That tell your hollow day —
The glass is at *my* lips, but the wine is far away,
The music's in *my* throat, but my soul no song discloses,
The laughter's on *my* tongue, but my heart is clay.

Weep not, fair lady, for the false,
The fickle love's rememberance,
What though another claim the waltz —
The curtain soon will close the dance.

Grieve not, pale lover, for the sweet,
Wild moment of thy vanished bliss;
The longest scene as Time is fleet —
The curtain soon will close the kiss.

And thou, too vain, too flattered mime,
Drink deep the pleasures of thy day,
No ruin is too mean for Time —
The curtain soon will close the play.

WALTER J. KINGSLEY

LO, THE PRESS AGENT

By many names men call me —
Press agent, publicity promoter, faker;
Ofttimes the short and simple liar.
Charles A. Dana told me
I was a buccaneer
On the high seas of journalism.
Many a newspaper business manager
Has charged me
With selling his space
Over his head.
Every one loves me
When I get his name into print —
For this is an age of publicity
And he who bloweth not his own horn
The same shall not be blown.
I have sired, nursed and reared
Many reputations.
Few men or women have I found
Scornful of praise or blame
In the press.
The folk of the stage
Live on publicity,
Yet to the world they pretend to dislike it,
Though wildly to me they plead for it, cry for it,
Ofttimes do that for it
Which must make the God Notoriety
Grin at the weakness of mortals.
I hold a terrible power
And sometimes my own moderation
Amazes me,

For I can abase as well as elevate,
Tear down as well as build up.
I know all the ways of fair speaking
And can lead my favorites
To fame and golden rewards.
There are a thousand channels
Through which press agency can exploit
Its star or its movement
Never obvious but like the submarine
Submersible beneath the sea
Of publicity.
But I know, too, of the ways
That undo in Manhattan.
There are bacilli of rumor
That slip through the finest of filters
And defy the remedial serums
Of angry denial.
Pin a laugh to your tale
When stalking your enemy
And not your exile nor your death
Will stay the guffaws of merriment
As the story flies
Through the Wicked Forties
And on to the " Road."
Laughter gives the rumor strong wings.
Truly the press agent,
Who knows his psychology,
Likewise his New York
In all of its ramifications,
And has a nimble wit,
Can play fast and loose
With the lives of many.

Nevertheless he has no great reward,
And most in the theatre
Draw fatter returns than he.
Yet is he called upon to make the show,
To save the show,
But never is he given credit
Comparable to that which falls
Upon the slightest jester or singer or dancer
Who mugs, mimes, or hoofs in a hit.
Yet is the press agent happy;
He loves his work;
It has excitement and intrigue;
And to further the cause of beautiful women,
To discover the wonderful girls of the theatre,
And lead them in progress triumphal
Till their names outface the jealous night,
On Broadway, in incandescents,
Is in itself a privilege.
That compensates
For the wisdom of the cub reporter,
The amusement of the seasoned editor,
Shredding the cherished story
And uprooting the flourishing "plant";
Makes one forgive
The ingratitude of artists arrived.
They who do not love me
I hope to have fear me;
There is only one hell,
And that is to be disregarded.

FIRST NIGHTS

August heat cannot weaken nor flivvers stale
Our first-night expectance when the new season opens.
Come on, boys and girls, the gang's all here;
The Death Watch is ready in orchestra chairs
Still shrouded in summer's cool slip pajamas,
And the undertakers of stage reputations
Are gathered to chatter about author and players,
And give them and their work disrespectful interment
By gleefully agreeing in that sage Broadway saying:
"Oh, what an awful oil can that piece turned out to be!"
It's hard when the Chanters of Death-House Blues
Have to turn to each other and reluctantly murmur:
"I'm afraid it's a hit — the poor fish is lucky."
First-nighters are the theatre's forty-niners,
Making the early rush to new dramatic gold fields,
And usually finding them barren.
Often must it madden the playwright to offer his ideals
To an audience whose personnel would for the most part
Regard an ideal as a symptom of sickness;
To show sweetness and beauty and color
To those whose knowledge of tints is confined
To the rouge and the lip stick on dressers;
To pioneer in playwrighting, to delve deep into mind,
When all that the first-nighters ask is plain entertainment.
How much of the great, wholesome public, hard-working and normal,
To whom the final appeal must be made

Frequents our first nights on Broadway?
Costumers, friends of the author, and critics,
Scene painters, all of the tradesmen concerned,
Kinsfolk of mummers even to the third generation,
Wine agents, hot-house ladies, unemployed players,
Hearty laughers or ready weepers "planted."
Most of them there prepare for a funeral;
Their diversion is nodding to friends and acquaintances,
And he or she who nods the most times
Is thereby the greatest first-nighter.
Some managers open to hand-picked audiences,
Others strive to escape the regulars;
But the majority seek for the standardized premier faces
That really mean so little in the life of the play.
Listen to the comments during intermission:
"It doesn't get over!" "It's a flop!"
"What atmosphere!" "An absolute steal!"
"Such originality!" "Not a bit life-like!"
"That author has a wonderful memory!"
"He copped that lyric from Irving Berlin!"
"He's as funny as a crutch or a cry for help!"
"They grabbed that number in London!"
"She's one of his tigers!"
"From a Lucile model, my dear, but home-made!"
"I can't hand him anything on this one!"
"Some heavy-sugar papa backed the production!"
"Isn't my boy wonderful!"
"Yes, but my girl is running away with the piece!"
"If you like this, you're not well!"
"What could be sweeter!"
"What large feet she has!" "His Adam's apple annoys me!"

"She must get her clothes on Avenue A!"
"They say she was born there!"
"What an awful sunburn!"
"Best thing in years!" "The storehouse for this one!"
"Did you catch her going up in her lines?"
"Yes, and he's fluffing all over the place!"
"Splendidly produced, don't you think?"
"I think the stage direction is rotten!"
So I suggest the old Roman fashion of presenting,
The artists, like gladiators crying:
"We, who are about to die, salute you!"

THE DRAMATIST

I've put one over at last!
My play with the surprise finish is a bear.
Al Woods wants to read all of my scripts;
Georgie Cohan speaks to me as an equal
And the office boy swings the gate without being asked.
I don't care if the manager's name is as large as the
play's
Or if the critics are featured all over the ash cans.
I'm going to get mine and I'm going to live.
A Rolls-Royce for me and trips " up the road,"
Long Beach and pretty girls, big eats at the Ritz
And the ice pitcher for the fellows who snubbed me.
How the other reporters laughed
When I showed my first script and started to peddle!
" Stick to the steady job," they advised.
" Play writing is too big a gamble;
It will never keep your nose in the feed bag."
I wrote a trunkful of junk; did a play succeed,
I immediately copied the fashion;
Like a pilfering tailor I stole the new models.
Kind David Belasco, with his face in the gloom,
And mine brightly lighted, said ministerially:
" Rather crude yet, my boy, but the way to write a play
Is to write plays from sunrise to sunset
And rewrite them long after midnight.
Try, try, try, my boy, and God bless you."
Broke and disgusted, I became a play reader
And the " yessir man " to a manager.
I was a play doctor, too.
A few of my patients lived

And I learned about drama from them.
How we gutted the scripts!
Grabbing a wonderful line, a peach of a scene,
A gem of a finish
Out of the rubbish that struggling poor devils
Borrowed money to typewrite and mail to us.
It's like opening oysters looking for pearls,
But pearls are to be found and out of the shell heaps
Come jewels that, polished and set by a clever artificer,
Are a season's theatrical wonder.
Finally came my own big idea.
I wrote and rewrote and cast and recast,
Convinced the manager, got a production.
Here am I young and successful,
And Walter and Thomas and Selwyn have nothing on me.
Press agents are hired to praise me.
Watch for my next big sensation,
But meanwhile I hope that that play-writing plumber,
Who had an idea and nothing else,
Never sees this one.

TYPES

They've got me down for a hick, bo,
Sam Harris says I'm the best boob in the biz,
And that no manager will cast me for anything else.
Curses on my hit in " 'Way Down East "
That handcuffs me forever to yokels,
And me a better character actor than Corse Payton!
That's how it is they're stuck on types,
And the wise guy who plays anything
Isn't given a look-in.
Listen to me, young feller, and don't ever
Let 'em tab you for keeps as a type.
It's curtains for a career as sure as you're born.
Why, there's actors sentenced to comedy dog parts,
To Chinks, to Wops, to Frenchmen and fluffs.
There ain't no release for them.
The producers and managers can see only one angle,
And you may be a Mansfield or Sothern.
It's outrageous that's what it is, that make-up
And character acting should be thrown in the discard.
You can sit in an agent's office for months
Before a part comes along that you fit without fixin'.
This natural stuff puts the kibosh on art
And a stock training ain't what it used to be.
Say, if ever I rise to be hind legs of a camel
Or a bloodhound chasing Eliza, I'll kick or I'll bite
The type-choosing manager.

Blessed be Providence
That gave us our Cohan;
Irreverent,
Resourceful, prolific, steady-advancing
George M.
Nothing in life
Better becomes him
Than his earliest choice
Of Jerry and Helen
For father and mother;
Bred in the wings and the dressing room,
The theatre alley his playground,
Hotels his home and his schoolhouse,
Blessed with a wonderful sister,
And in love with a violin.
From baby days used to the footlights,
With infrequent teachers of book lore
In the cities of lengthy engagements
Showing him pages of learning
That he turned from to life's open volume,
Acquiring indelible lessons,
Loyalty, candor, clear seeing,
Sincerity, plain speaking, love of his own,
Passion for all things American.
From Jerry, his father,
Came Celtic humor, delight in the dance,
And devotion to things of the theatre;
From Helen, his mother,
Depth, Celtic devotion to things of the spirit,
Fineness of soul.

Early he turned from his fiddle
To write popular songs
And tunes so whistly and catchy
That the music of a child
Enraptured the nation.
Then followed comedy sketches,
Gay little pieces that made public
And player-folk chatter of Cohan.
Later, essaying the musical comedy,
He wrote " Running for Office,"
To be followed by that impudent
Classic of fresh young America,
" Little Johnnie Jones."
One followed another in rapid succession;
His name grew a cherished possession,
And ever his dancing delighted.
His manner of singing and speaking
Provoked to endless imitation.
His personality became better known
Then the President's.
Always he soared in ambition
And, becoming a lord of the theatre,
He ventured on serious drama,
And out of his wisdom and watching
Wrote masterful plays,
Envisaging the types of our natives.
Truly a genius,
Genius in friendship, genius in stagecraft,
Genius in life!
Even in choosing a partner
He fattened his average,
Batting four hundred

By taking a kindred irreverent soul,
Graduated out of the whirlpool
That wrecks all but the strongest,
Born on the eastern edge
Of Manhattan,
Sam H. Harris, man of business,
Who to the skill of the trader
Adds the joy in life
And the sense of humor,
Coupled with pleasure in giving
And helping
That Cohan demands of his pals.
Together they plan wonderful projects,
And the artist soul
And the soul of commerce
Are an unbeatable union.
Best of all about Cohan
Is his congenital manliness.
He sees Americans
As our soil and our air and our water
Have made them;
Types as distinct as the Indian.
He follows no school,
Knows little of movements artistic.
A lonely creator,
His friends are not writing men,
Reformers, uplifters or zealots.
He writes the life he has lived
So fully and zestfully,
And over it all plays like sheet lightning
A beneficent humor.
Growth is his hall-mark,

Hard work his chief recreation;
Not Balzac could toil with labor titanic
More terribly.
George M. Cohan,
Excelling in everything —
Beloved son, brother, father, partner, friend,
Our best-beloved man of the theatre.

DAVID BELASCO

King David of old slew the Philistines;
Our David has made them admirers and patrons;
He has numbered the people
Night after night in his theatres.
Will he ever, I wonder, send forth for the Shunammite?
Many there be who would answer his calling,
For he has shown ambitious fair women
To acting's high places.
As Rodin in marble saw wondrous creations
To be freed by the chisel,
So Belasco in immature genius and beauty
Sees the resplendent star to be kindled
At his own steady beacon.
Too varied a mind for our comprehension,
Too big and too broad and too subtle
To be understood of the bourgeois American
Whom he has led decade after decade
By a nose ring artistic.
Capable of everything, he has worked
With the ease of a master, giving the public
Marvelous detail, unfailing sensation and poses pictorial;
Preferring the certain success to arduous striving
For the more excellent things of the future.
Like David his forebear, a king but no prophet,
Amazingly wise in his own generation.
A wizard in art of the everyday,
Lord of the spotlight and dimmer,

But nursing the unconquerable hope, the inviolable shade
Of what in his dreams Oriental
He fain would do, did not necessity drive him.
His the fascination of a great personality.
Who knoweth not him of the clerical collar?
Hair of the sage and eyes of the poet,
Features perfectly drawn and as mobile
As those of the inspired actor;
With speech so much blander than honey
And insight that maketh his staged stumbling in bargains
Cover the shrewdness of a masterly trader.
None better than he knoweth the crowd and its likings,
As to using the patter of drama artistic,
That's where he lives.
With incense and color and scenery
He refilleth the bottle of art so that the contents
Go twice better than in the original package.
Thanks be to David for joy in the playhouse.
Wizard, magician, necromancer of switchboards,
He hath woven spells from the actual,
Keeping ideals and ideas well in the background.
Like Gautier, these things delight him:
Gold, marble and purple; brilliance, solidity, color.
He can stage Tiffany's jewels but not Maeterlinck's bees.
Deep in his soul there are tempests
Revealed in the storms of his dramas —
Sandstorm and snowstorm, rainstorm and hurricane.
That nature revealed in its subtle reactions
Would show in its deeps the soul of an Angelo

Subdued to success and dyed by democracy.
Opportunism hath made him
An artistic materialist.
One work remains for David Belasco,
And that is to stage with patient precision
A cross section in drama of his own self-surprising,
Making the world sit up and take notice
With what "masterly detail," "unfailing atmosphere,"
"Startling reality" he can star David Belasco.

LO, THE HEADLINER

I was not raised for vaudeville.
Father and mother were veteran legits;
They loved the Bard and the "Lady of Lyons."
I was born on a show boat on the Cumberland;
I was carried on as a child
When the farm girl revealed her shame
On the night of the snowstorm.
The old folks died with grease paint on their faces.
I did a little of everything
Even to staking out a pitch in a street fair.
Hiram Grafter taught me to ballyhoo
And to make openings.
I stole the business of Billy Sunday
And imitated William Jennings Bryan.
I became famous in the small towns.
One day Poli heard me—
He's the head of the New England variety circuit.—
"Cul," he said, "you are a born monologist.
Where you got that stuff I don't know,
But you would be a riot in the two-a-day.
Quit this hanky-panky
And I'll make you a headliner."
Well, I fell for his line of talk
Like the sod busters had fallen for mine.
Aaron Hoffman wrote me a topical monologue;
Max Marx made me a suit of clothes;
And Lew Dockstader wised me up
On how to jockey my laughs.
I opened in Hartford;
Believe me, I was some scream.

I gave them gravy, and hokum,
And when they ate it up I came through
With the old jasbo,
Than which there is nothing so efficacious
In vaudeville, polite or otherwise.
The first thing I did I hollered for more dough,
And Poli says:
"That's what I get for feeding you meat,
But you are a riot all right, all right,
So I guess you are on for more kale."
I kept getting better.
I got so's I could follow any act at all
And get my laughs.
And he who getteth his laughs
Is greater than he who taketh a city.
At last the Palace Theatre sent for me
And I signed up for a week.
They kept me two.
I am a headliner;
I stand at the corner of Forty-seventh Street
And Little Old Broadway;
Throw out my chest,
Call the agents and vaudeville magnates
By their first names.
I am a HEADLINER with a home in Freeport.

MURDOCK PEMBERTON

THE SCREEN

From midnight till the following noon
I stand in shadow,
Just a splotch of white,
Unnoted by the cleaning crew
Who've spent their hours of toil
That I might live again.
Yet they hold no reverence for my charms,
And if they pause amid their work
They do not glance at me;
All their admiration, all their awe,
Is for the gold and scarlet trappings of the home
That's built to house my wonders;
Or for the gorgeous murals all around,
Which really, after all,
Were put in place as most lame substitutes,
Striving to soothe the patron's ire
For those few moments when my face is dark.
Yes, men have built a palace sheltering me,
And as the endless ocean washes on its stretch of beach
The tides of people flow to me.

All things I am to everyone;
The newsboys, shopgirls,
And all starved souls
Who've clutched at life and missed,
See in my magic face,
The lowly rise to fame and palaces,
See virtue triumph every time
And rich and wicked justly flayed.
Old men are tearful

When I show them what they might have been.
And others, not so old,
Bask in the sunshine of my fairy tales.
The lovers see new ways to woo;
And wives see ways to use old brooms.
Some nights I see the jeweled opera crowd
Who seem aloof but inwardly are fond of me
Because I've caught the gracious beauty of their pets.
Then some there are who watch my changing face
To catch new history's shadow
As it falls from day to day.
And at the noiseless tramp of soldier feet,
In time to music of the warring tribes,
The shadow men across my face
Seem living with the hope or dread
Of those who watch them off to wars.

In sordid substance I am but a sheet,
A fabric of some fireproof stuff.
And yet, in every port where ships can ride,
In every nook where there is breath of life,
Intrepid men face death
To catch for me the fleeting phases of the world
Lest I lose some charming facet of my face.
And all the masters of all time
Have thrummed their harps
And bowed their violins
To fashion melodies that might be played
The while I tell my tales.
O you who hold the mirror up to nature,
Behold my cosmic scope:
I am the mirror of the whirling globe.

BROADWAY — NIGHT

I saw the rich in motor cars
Held in long lines
Until cross-streams of cars flowed by;
I saw young boys in service clothes
And flags flung out from tradesmen's doors;
I saw some thousand drifting men
Some thousand aimless women;
I saw some thousand wearied eyes
That caught no sparkle from the myriad lights
Which blazoned everywhere;
I saw a man stop in his walk
To pet an old black cat.

MATINEE

They pass the window
Where I sit at work,
In silks and furs
And boots and hats
All of the latest mode.
They chatter as they pass
Of various things
But hardly hear the words they speak
So tense are they
Upon a life they know begins for them
At 2:15.

Within the theatre
The air is pungent with the mixed perfumes,
More scents than ever blew from Araby.
And there's a rapid hum
Of some six hundred secrets;
Then sudden hush
As tongues and violins cease.

The play is on.

There is a hastening of the beat
Of some six hundred hearts.
There're twitches soon about the lips,
And later copious tears
From waiting eyes;
But all this time
There are six hundred separate souls
The playwright's puppet has to woo,

To win, to humor, or to cajole,
Until, with master stroke
Of Devil knowledge,
Or old Adam's,
He crushes in his manful arms
The languid heroine
And forcing back her golden head
Implants the kiss.

And then against his heaving breast
The hero feels the beatings of six hundred hearts
In mighty unison,
And on his lips there is the pulse
Of that one lingering kiss
Returned six-hundred fold.

PAVLOWA

I was working on *The Daily News*
When I first heard of her,
And from that time
Until the day she came to town
I longed to see her dance.
The night the dancer and her ballet came
The Desk assigned me to my nightly run
Of hotels, clubs, and undertakers' shops;
I was so green
I had not learned
The art of using telephones
To make it seem
That I was hot upon the trail of news
While loafing otherwhere.
How could I do my trick
And also see her dance?
So I left bread and butter flat,
To feast my eyes, which had been prairie-fed,
Upon this vision from another world.

I'd seen the wind
Go rippling over seas of wheat;
I'd stood at night within a wood
And felt the pulse of growing things
Upon the April air;
I'd seen the hawks arise and soar;
And dragon-flies
At sunrise over misty pools —
But all these things had never known a name
Until I saw Pavlowa dance.

Next day the editor explained
That although art was — art,
He'd found a boy to take my place.
The days that followed
When I walked the town
Seeking for some sort of work,
The haze of Indian Summer
Blended with the dream
Of that one night's magic.
And though I needed work to keep alive
My thoughts would go no further
Than Pavlowa as the maid Giselle . . .
Then cold days came,
And found the dream a fabric much too thin;
And finally a job,
And I was back to stomach fare.

But through the years
I've nursed the sacrifice,
Counting it a tribute
Unlike all the things
That Kings and Queens have laid before her feet;
And wishing somehow she might know
About the price
The cub reporter paid
To see Pavlowa dance.

And then by trick of time,
We came together at the Hippodrome;
And every day I saw her dance.
One morning in the darkened wings
I saw a big-eyed woman in a filmy thing

Go through the exercises
Athletes use when training for a team;
And from a stage-hand learned
That this Pavlowa, incomparable one,
Out of every day spent hours
On elementary practice steps.
And now somehow
I can not find the heart
To tell Pavlowa of the price I paid
To see her dance.

THE OLD CHORUS MAN

He's played with Booth,
He's shared applause with Jefferson,
He's run the gamut of the soul
Imparting substance to the shadow men
Masters have fashioned with their quills
And set upon the boards.
Great men-of-iron were his favored rôles,
(Once he essayed Napoleon).
And now, unknowing, he plays his greatest tragedy:
Dressed in a garb to look like service clothes,
Cheeks lit by fire — of make-up box,
He marches with a squad of sallow youths
And bare-kneed girls,
Keeping step to tattoo of the drums
Beat by some shapely maids in tights,
While close by in the silent streets
There march long files of purposed men
Who go to death, perhaps,
For the same cause he travesties
Within the playhouse walls.

When I was old enough to walk
I rode a circus horse;
My first teeth held me swinging from a high trapeze.
About the age young men go out to colleges
I trudged the sanded vasts of Northern Africa,
Top-mounter in a nomad Arab tumbling troupe.
I was Christian, that is white and Infidel,
So old Abdullah took me in his tent
And stripping off my white man's clothes
Painted me with dye made from the chestnut hulls,
Laughing the while about the potency of juice
That would prove armour 'gainst some zealot's scimitar.
Four camels made our caravan
And these we also used for " props."
When we played a Morocco town
The chieftain met us at the hamlet's edge
Asked of Abdullah what his mission there,
Then let us enter
He leading our caravan to the chieftain's hut,
Where we sat upon the sand
The thirty odd of us
Surrounded by as many lesser chiefs.
The hookah solemnly was passed around
And then the hamlet chief would speak;
" Stranger, why have you forsaken home
And drawn believers after you,
You bear no spices, oil, or woven cloth,
No jewels nor any merchantry? "

And then Abdullah:
"True, Allah's precious son,
We trade in naught men feed their bellies on
But we have wares to thrill brave men,
To make your youth see what use bodies are,
To make your women blush
That they have no such men."

"What are these magic wares?"

"Why we have here an Arab youth
Who seems possessed of wings,
Jumping three camels in a row."

"So! In this very village there's a lad
Who jumps four camels
With half the wind it takes you, telling of your boy."

Scoff followed boast and back again
Until the chief arose,
Saying to the lesser chiefs
That they should call the local tribe
To meet beside the caravanserai
Before another sun went down
To see if these vain wandering men
Could do one half the deeds they boasted.

So we met at sundown,
Our brown men stripped
Except for linen clouts.
We tumbled, jumped, made human pyramids,
And whirled as only Dervish whirl.

Then as a climax the village boy essayed
To span the four trained camels
Who at Abdullah's soft-spoke word
Moved just enough apart to make the boy fall short.
And then our sinewed lad would make the leap,
The camels crowding close together
At another soft command.
Our lad making good his jump,
The populace would grant our greater skill;
A goatskin filled with wine,
And honey mixed with melted butter
Was offered us within the caravanserai.
Then we moved out beyond the town
And pitched our tents of camels' hair,
Rising before the sun to face the friendless desert wastes
Until we reached another habitation on the camel trail,
I (who played the dumb boy of the tribe
Lest my Christian tongue betray me)
Trudging behind with all the salary —
Chasing the desert after two new sheep,
Our net receipts for that Moroccan one-night stand.

Now twice each day within the Hippodrome
I, a buffoon in absurd clothes,
Strive to make the thousands laugh;
And when my act is done
There comes the tread of camels' feet,
Followed by Slayman Ali and his Arab troupe,
Who tumble, jump and build pyramids
Before a canvas Sphinx upon a painted desert . . . . .
When I saw Slayman last
He was a boy

Chasing the sheep with me
Beneath Morocco's moon.
Tell me, where dwells romance, anyway?
In Manhattan, or Arabian, nights?

PRE-EMINENCE

I once knew a man
Who'd met Duse,
(Or so he said)
And talked with her;
As she came down a windy street
He turned a corner
Headlong into her.
"I am so sorry," Duse said,
"I was looking at the stars."

My envy of that man
Withstood the years
Until one day I met a Dane
Who'd talked with Henrik Ibsen:
This man, with head bowed to the wind,
Was walking up a Stockholm way
When 'round the corner came the seer,
And he plumped into him.
And that great mind
Whose thinking moved the world
Surveyed my friend
Through his big eyes
And slowly spoke:
"Since when have codfish come to land?"

With all the awe
One has for those who've known the great,
These two I've envied
Until the other day
When blundering 'round behind the scenes
I stepped upon Pavlowa's toe.